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THE CHURCH AND CHARITY

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One of the most interesting facts in the history of social and moral progress is the converging, into one great stream of activities, of streams which took their origin in different, and oftentimes in widely separated, parts of the field of human activity. The topography of history is much like the topography of the earth. As brooks and rivulets having their source in widely separated parts of a country at last flow together into a great river and then into the sea, so ideals and purposes conceived here and there on the surface of life generate activities which flow separately for a time, perhaps for ages, seemingly unrelated, though identical in their nature and at last converging in one great stream. The history of religion, for example, shows how without communication ideas have been conceived simultaneously in different parts of the world, have been developed in localities, and only after the progress of years, perhaps of centuries, have come together to constitute world-wide faith or practice. Sooner or later ideas and practices to have world importance must relate themselves to all other similar ideas and practices. The progress of history is toward unity, not the unity which destroys variety either of idea or of method, but the unity which is none the less unity because it embraces many varieties. The centralizing tendency of this age in practical affairs is only the surface expression of the centralizing tendency of the whole of life. And that variety is not sacrificed by this tendency to increasing unity is evidenced by an equally patent tendency to specialization.

These reflections are induced by a consideration of the fact which confronts church and charity workers today that the ideas and practices of charity which obtain in the church and those which obtain in what we may call the world of scientific charity

have not only not as yet flown together into one sustained, all-powerful effort to abolish pauperism and alleviate poverty, but are not even so related as to preclude unnecessary competition and conflict of method, and consequent loss of efficiency. From the beginning of the Christian era up to the beginning of the last half of the nineteenth century the Christian church was the sole charitable agency in the western world. The ideals and methods of the administration of charity were those which grew, not out of the study of charity as a science, but out of religious feeling. The practice of charity was a kind of inference from the Christian duty of love for one's neighbor, and was regulated and controlled by no specific conception of charity, indeed by no principles of judgment or knowledge other than those of the individual practitioner of charity. Church charity took no official cognizance of those causes of pauperism and poverty which lie outside of the realm of religion in the realm of the political or social or economic sciences. Indeed, it seems fair to say that the practice of charity in the church was not primarily for the benefit of the recipient of charity, much less was it an attempt to treat the causes of pauperism and poverty, but was primarily for the benefit of the doer of the charity. Christianity laid down two great commandments: The first, to love God with all the mind, with all the heart, and with all the soul; and the second, to love one's neighbor as oneself; and the administration of charity was a mode of compliance with the second commandment. I do not mean to say that it arose from a mere selfish desire to save one's soul, though in many cases it did arise from such a desire; but logically and actually it was an inference from a doctrine and a mode of compliance with command, its primary reference being for the sake of the person practicing it. That this is a fact is shown, I think, by the general failure, up to the time when scientific charity came into being, to study the problem of poverty objectively and to deal with it in the terms and according to the principles of those realms of thought and activity in which its causes lie. To be sure the benefit of the recipients of charity was aimed at in the lazar houses, the hospitals, the homes for the defective; but it seems to me absolutely fair to say that that was

not the primary thought, the primary purpose; the primary purpose was to comply with the command of religion. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. How can a man love his neighbor except by doing him good! Indeed, one does not do injustice to Christianity in so stating its principle of charity, since if a man be truly religious the primary motive of his conduct must be obedience to divine command. The things dictated by obedience must be secondary both in his affection and in his thought of the principle of obedience itself. And I venture to say that scientific charity, however much it may differ in method, ought not and cannot quarrel with that principle. It is one of the deepest of the world's thoughts that love and service to one's kind, personal and social morality, are results of the religious principle, which is love for God. But it is an unquestionable fact that the rise of ideas and methods of charitable administration other than the church's ideas and methods was due to the failure of the church to realize the nature of the problem of charity and to deal with pauperism and poverty according to the terms of their origins and of the realms to which they belonged. There would have been and could have been no such movement in history as the modern charity movement except as a result of a discovery that to be effective charity must be a primary and not a secondary activity; its reference must be relative to the causes of its problem and to the improvement and well-being of its human objects.

We come then to the necessity of defining the function of the church. The church was in the field first, and if it be generically a charitable society the existence of any other charitable society is a violation of the law of organization and an impertinence; for with its immense plant, its great and venerable history, its sacred traditions, its powerful and devoted membership, it can do with greater efficiency and with less expenditure of energy the charitable work of Christendom than all other charitable societies combined. They are but the upshoots of a day, and are themselves so imperfectly adapted and adjusted one to the other that conflicts of opinion and method and duplication of effort are still besetting faults.

But is the church a charitable society? In an important

sense yes; in an equally important sense no. It is a charitable society in a derivative sense, because it is a community of people brought together by their devotion to the ideals and methods of Jesus Christ and believing in the God whom he defined to them as love and grace. In other words, the church is a society organized for the purpose of promulgating the practice of the ideals and methods of Jesus Christ and of perpetuating and extending his influence and work in the world. It is a charitable society only in the sense that the God whom it worships and the Christ whose leadership it follows are represented to its consciousness as supremely loving and as requiring in worshiper and follower the spirit of love and service. The real function of the church, if we have defined it correctly, is an intellectual or a spiritual function, is the inspiring and fostering of the consciousness of God and of the ideals and methods of Jesus Christ. The implications of Jesus' example in the work of the modern church must be spiritually determined. Its logical meaning in modern life and under modern conditions and with modern resources are what we want, not its exact imitation. The law of modern church method and activity must be given to us by a spiritual interpretation of the meaning of Jesus' method and activity, and be given only by a process of spiritual interpretation and adaptation. The late Dr. Thomas Arnold said: "The true and grand idea of a church is that of a society making men like Christ, earth like heaven, and the kingdoms of this world the kingdom of God." Whatever will do that or will help to do that is the primary and fundamental concern of the church. A recent writer in the *American Journal of Sociology* has contributed an article on "The Church as The Maker of Conscience," in which the writer argues with a good deal of force that the church's real function is to make conscience. I do not believe that the primary concern of the church is to make conscience, but that it is rather to inspire and develop the idea of God and the sense of personal relationship with him. The church's primary business is to preach God and all that grows out of his existence and of his relationship to mankind, to unveil the divine ideal for the individual man and

for society. In putting the matter in this way I am not unconscious of the fact that the practical method of preaching God and of unveiling the divine ideal for an individual and for society is the preaching of the ideal mankind, is the unveiling of the soul itself and of the ideal society. The ideal of God is not simply a revelation but an evolution as well. Hence we may define the church in the words of the writer of the article to which I have referred as "the organized confession of the divine life of man." But it really makes no difference from which end we look at this function of the church; it is one and the same function, namely, to declare God and the human implications of his being and character. Secondly, the field of operation of the church is in the realm of the affections, of the reason, and the will. "By its teaching, its order, and its ordinances, it seeks to convince the reason, to stir the affections, and to persuade the will." Why should it attempt to go outside of this field into the realm of concrete social activity? Out of the heart are the issues of life; as a man thinketh in his heart so he is. The church's function is at the very center of human life and conduct. If its gospel is what it claims it to be, it is the inspiration and mainspring of all concrete personal and social activity, the regulative principle, the dynamic of life. What it inspires will find its way into personal character and activity, into civil statute, and into economic and social practice. No other institution, or coterie of individuals, can do its work; no other formulation of ideals can be substituted for its simple platform; no other body can occupy its place in life. Political consciousness can be developed by the state; economic practice can be formulated by the Chamber of Commerce; even conscience can be made by the school and the platform. But no institution, except the church, can open the spiritual eyes of men so that they view life from above, can give to them spiritual inspiration and power which shall be the mainspring of all social and moral activity. The modern church has fallen a victim to the idea that spiritual inspiration needs exemplification and illustration in concrete activity, but it does not. It is the one kind of teaching, the practical lessons of which are born

in the mind of the pupil. It is an awakener of practical efficiency not an instructor as to method. Experience is the great teacher of method.

But, to be practical, what is the function of the church with respect to charitable activity? It is to preach and to inspire that disposition out of which all charitable activity grows, not itself as an institution to engage in the concrete practice of charity. It is the business of church members as individuals and of societies within the church to practice all forms of charitable activity in accordance with those laws of charity which grow out of the principle of religion, that is, love of God and of one's kind, and also out of the principles of economic and social well-being. These latter principles may or may not be strictly contained in the principle of religion. They cannot be contradictory to it, but they need not be explicitly contained in it or directly suggested by it. Perhaps I should have said that the laws of charitable activity grow also out of the principle of moral well-being, but I think the principle of moral well-being is directly and explicitly contained in the religious principle. Love of one's kind means always right moral relations to one's kind. Accordingly, the practice of charity must always take account of, and be regulated by, the principle of moral well-being; that is to be taken for granted. It is an important distinction we are making between the activity of the church as an institution and the activity of members of the church as individuals. An institution must as such prescribe the method of its activity; it must work by a method which is peculiar to it as an institution and which may not be founded upon those economic and social principles which are not necessarily contained in the religious principle. Charity is a compound effort. The necessity of charity results from a violation of, or a failure to comply with, laws which are not necessarily religious but which may be economic and social. To get at the causes of a charitable problem requires oftentimes a special knowledge which is not in the possession of the clergyman as such, or of the individual church member as a church

member. In almost every instance of application by an individual or a family for charitable relief some of the causes are economic or social. If the man is out of work and consequently unable to render support for himself or his family, the cause may be moral, that is, it may be the man's intemperance or immorality; or it may be his economic inefficiency; or it may be that the kind of work which he can do is not demanded in the locality in which he is for the time being situated; he may have migrated because of false information that has come to him and have found an over-plus of labor of the kind for which he is best fitted; the conditions of his trade may have changed so that in the place in which he has spent his life the kind of labor which he is competent to perform is no longer required. In all these cases, which frequently occur, there is needed a knowledge of economic or industrial conditions which is the peculiar possession, not of the clergyman or of the Christian as such, but of the economist or industrialist. Again the laws of method according to which charity should be administered are not necessarily given by the religious principle but by other principles not contradictory but different in their nature and origin. Charity does not mean simply love, as the religious etymologists would have it mean, but intelligent love; and the intelligence of the love takes its origin in a knowledge that is not simply religious, but economic as well. An individual or a society inspired by love of God and love of human kind and not bound by the laws and methods of the church will easily and naturally seek those other principles according to which charitable activity must be practiced. There is a law of adaptation of institutions; and the institution set to do charitable work will adapt itself easily and naturally to the laws of charitable work; its method will grow out of its functions. As the Master is reported to have said: Doing truth leadeth to the light. All constructive work in charity—and all charitable work should be constructive—should be done by the man or by the society whose business it is to know the laws of construction. We hear it often said that charity is not the giving of alms, but we fail to realize, I think, how fundamentally true that proposition is, and also what charity is if it be not the giving of alms. Real charity is an attempt to make a man or a family equal

to the economic and social battle of life. It is an attempt to stimulate and foster economic and social efficiency, to put a man into the condition in which he may use his natural powers to their utmost, and not only that, but to develop the natural powers to a higher efficiency. It is to give work to the workless according to the natural, not the forced, conditions of work, according to the economic laws of work. It is perhaps to move a man or a family to a place in which the work he can best do is to be found; it is perhaps to develop where the man or the family is, in accordance with the principles of sound economics, the condition and fact of the work he or they can best do; it is to teach the man who does not know how to regulate his expenditure to his income the right use of his income; it is to teach the woman who does not know how to use the normal earnings of her husband the law of thrift and prudence; it is to heal the sick, not by word of mouth or by anointing with clay and spittle, but by medical treatment and surgical operation; it is to provide care for the disabled and non-productive member or members of a family in institutions adapted to such purposes. All that is the function of the scientific specialist, not of the prophet or preacher, or of the church as an institution. It is not the business of a preacher to preach economics or sociology, the rights of labor or the rights of capital, nor the platforms of parties or the methods of treatment of the imbecile, insane, or criminal. It is his business to preach and inspire the love of human kind growing out of the love of God, which will combine itself with scientific knowledge of economics, sociology, politics, therapeutics, and criminology. Salt is good for savor, but salt is not bricks or mortar, not commerce or manufacture, not drug or surgeon's knife. Salt is salt; leaven is leaven; religion is religion, or, in another word, inspiration. There is a psychology of charity of which the believer in practical charitable activity for the church fails to take account. To inspire a man to do a thing is not the same act as to teach him how to do it. The method follows the inspiration. A different set of faculties comes into play when a man is being taught method from those which are in play when he is being inspired. Attention, accurate observation, and discrimination are not the uppermost activities in the man who is being

inspired. To teach a woman how to sweep a room rightly, how to make nourishing soups and good bread, is not the same as to inspire her to do those acts. The latter gives her a powerful motive for sweeping a room, or making soup, or making bread; the former teaches her how to do them rightly. To inspire a blind man to make brooms, a stoker to fire a furnace, a longshoreman to load a ship, a dago to dig a ditch, a carpenter to make a mortise and tenon, an engineer to run a machine, is not the same thing and does not call into play the same mental qualities as to teach any one of these men how to do rightly and efficiently his own proper work. The one calls into play the emotional and volitional faculties—the desire and the will; the other calls into play the intellectual faculties—attention, observation, and discrimination. It is just as much the business of the charity worker to procure for his beneficiary instruction in practical efficiency as it is to inspire the motive and will; it is just as much the business of the charity worker to procure for his beneficiary the knowledge as to when and how to find his work and how to do it when found as it is to inspire him with the desire and will to work and support his family. The charity worker, and the charity worker only, is required to procure this knowledge for his beneficiary; it is his business to know what kind of knowledge is needed and to procure it.

But it is for no mere economic reason that one who loves the work of charity, and the church as well, pleads that the church as such should cease from the administration of charity. It is for a deeper reason, and one which involves as much the interest of the church as that of wise and efficient charity administration. There is something almost pathetic in the plea of a man like J. R. Green, who was at the time he made that plea a hard-working London parish clergyman. In speaking of church administration of charity in London, he says:

I am simply horrified at the things I see going on this winter. That scoundrel with his "gold hidden under the ruins" and the like, and all I can do is to hold aloof and shriek. I must shriek, for I have held my tongue for fear of hurting the poor. Think of the West-End Pauperizing Fund with its "loaf and tract" system! . . . This newspaper appeal dodge is sapping all independence. . . . How I wish the clergy would strike and throw up the relief business altogether.

The fundamental objection to church administration of charity is that it sets a premium both on the spirit of proselyting by means of material subsidy, and on the spirit of selling ecclesiastical profession for material support. It is hard enough when treating the needy upon economic and moral ground—and money is given—to keep the minds of beneficiaries to the economic and moral significance of the treatment; but it is vastly harder, if not impossible, to keep the minds of the needy upon the religious significance of treatment when money or material gain is involved. The whole policy—and the church if it is to administer charitable relief cannot avoid the policy—of caring for those within the particular fold of a church is, on the one hand, an exclusion of others who may need care and relief more; and on the other, an invitation to hypocrites and to those whose moral vigor is depleted by privation and want to become hypocrites, and to sell their ecclesiastical allegiance for a loaf of bread, or for a meal ticket, or for cheap toys hanging on a Christmas tree. The church's attempt to overcome the necessary results of a policy of charitable relief by excluding those who do not belong to its fold from participation in that relief has not remedied the evil at all, but has created an even greater one, viz., the easy selling of ecclesiastical profession. The matter of tense in ecclesiastical profession is easily overlooked; for who can distinguish unfailingly, and especially what clergyman anxious for the growth of his church, can distinguish between that allegiance which is in the past tense and that allegiance which is in the present tense? But I hear the clergymen say: "To take away from the church and the minister the right of charitable relief to its own poor and to commit that duty to a secular charitable organization is to violate priestly confidence and that secret and relationship which exists between the clergyman and the needy members of his flock." That objection can, I think, be easily met by making the whole practice of church and ministerial charitable administration personal and not institutional. If a clergyman can administer relief to a needy person or family as a personal friend not as a minister, let him do so; or if he can find some other member of

the congregation who can administer that relief as a personal friend, let him do that. The aim of organized charity is, wherever practiced, to institute personal relationship between those who have somewhat to give and those who need to receive. Charity should always be a personal matter between personal friends. Institutionalism is as objectionable in a charity organization society as in a church, except that it does not involve the evil of buying and selling religious and ecclesiastical profession. For a church to cease at once and absolutely from every form of institutional administration of charity is not to violate personal relationship, but to preserve it. The church need not be afraid of full and free concession to that spirit of the age which demands differentiation of function and work. It is not the secularization of practical activity to make those responsible for it who are by nature and training best fitted to do it. No practical activity can be secular if the church remains true to her mission, that of teaching men to see life from above, that of inspiring them with a sense and with a love of God and of their kind. Religion means the inspiration and development of individual and personal relationship of every man to God and to duty; and if the church be true to that great central work which is hers, and hers only, she may courageously and whole heartedly concede to men and to societies inspired with the spirit which she has to give them the practical work of carrying out her ideals in the state, in business, and in society.

One last word as to the practical charitable function of the church. It is the church's peculiar function to develop in men love of their neighbors; or, to translate into the phrase of charitable activity, to furnish friendly visitors. If she does this she is fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of her Founder's example. His life was given in service to his kind, not as a whole but as individuals. His relationship was primarily with the individual men and women with whose lives he came into contact. The church could do nothing more Christian-like and nothing more serviceable to humanity than to train men and women to consecrate themselves to the work of friendly visiting, to the incarnat-

ing by the side of some person or family the spirit and the helpfulness of Christ. She should remember that real charity is not the giving of alms, but the reconstructing of individual and family life in order to make it adequate to the moral and social battle which every life and which every family has to wage. To enter into the life of a man or of a family depleted and devitalized by the stress of poverty and suffering, to inspire him or it with new hope and new courage, to teach him or it the divine law of service, by example and advice to show to him or to it the necessary results of efficient endeavor, and to provide for him or for it the opportunity which may be lacking—that is the real work of charity; and to furnish men and women who have both the spirit and the wisdom to do this work is the real and the only function of the church in charity.